

CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER N0.60

DECEMBER 2003

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Presidential Amblings November 2003

As our society starts a new season it is an appropriate time to stand back and look to the future. I always think that planting bulbs is one of the most exciting jobs in the garden. You take these unpromising rather scruffy brown objects from the bag, scrape out a hole with the almost certainty, squirrels, mice and eel-worm permitting, of a glorious show next Spring and for many years to come. When our predecessors started Cardiff Naturalists' Society, I wonder if they envisaged it surviving and reappearing each year right in to the 21 century.

It behoves us to keep the Society in good heart. We always want to see new members - encourage your friends and acquaintances to join. Perhaps we should vary our formulae of indoor and outdoor meetings -although they work well and are enjoyed by us all. Should we be looking to change? Please think about this and discuss with any members of Council. Council has an agenda item for this purpose planned for its next meeting

The recent spells of good weather have given us some great opportunities for enjoying the outside world. On a day of high winds I enjoyed prolonged sightings of the peregrines at Nash Point as even they battled with the elements. Then this week dog and I had a fabulous day around Tintem as the woods blazed in the Autumn sunshine. Yesterday saw a rare visitor to my garden as a treecreeper fed in the silver birch.

May we all continue to enjoy our good fortune to live in an area with such a diverse landscape and habitats. Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to everyone.

Joan Andrews

Mairead's Eightieth

The first indoor meeting of 2003-04 was something rather special. After the brief business of the AGM, we were entertained in her usual inimitable style by a talk by Mairead Sutherland on her visits to the Caribbean Islands of Antigua and Montserrat. What she had not been told when invited to speak was that we planned to make the evening an occasion to celebrate her 80th birthday and to show our appreciation of the amazing service she has given to the society over so many years in almost every capacity, including that of President, Secretary and meetings organiser, as well as being an invaluable support and adviser to her successors.

After Mairead's talk she was persuaded to sit and listen to tributes and anecdotes from colleagues - Mary Gillham, Steve Howe and Joyce Lloyd. We were especially pleased to welcome as guests Fiona and Liam, Mairead's daughter and grandson and to be joined by friends from Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists Society. Our thanks also to Diana Phillips for the cake, most appropriately decorated with symbols from the Emerald Isle.

Thanks to all who contributed to such a happy occasion.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all members.

Copy for March newsletter by February 12th 2004 Ed.

Field Meetings January to April 2004.

Sunday 11th January.
Start time 9.00 am.

Cardiff Birdwatch.
Packed lunch.

Meeting at Wild Gardens Road at the north end of Roath Park we will be starting with a stroll around the lake this year then onto further sites in the Cardiff area. Our choice of site after Roath Park will be 'weather dependent' but please dress appropriately. Rob Nottage will be our guide as usual. We had a very good total of birds last year with some excellent sightings of water rail at Forest Farm and dipper.

Sunday February 29th. Start
time 8.30(museum)

Exe estuary.
Packed lunch.

A coach trip to the Exe estuary with the exact itinerary to be decided nearer the time according to the weather, tides and birds about so we can go for the maximum numbers of birds to be seen. We would expect to return to Cardiff by 7 pm. Sites we may go to include Bowling Green marsh, Topsham, Exmin-ster marsh and Dawlish Warren.

A booking form is included with this newsletter. Please return to me by February 15th

Sunday 14th March.
Start time 10.00am

Coed-y-Bwl.

A guided walk around this small limestone reserve owned by the Wildlife trust. Spring flowers are magnificent here.

We will be meeting outside Blackball Farm - parking on the grass verge here, which is 100m south west from the reserve {SS909751}, 1 km east of St Brides Major. A map will be included in the next newsletter.

Saturday April 17th.
Start time 10.00am

Cowbridge.
Packed lunch.

Starting at the Cattle Market carpark in Cowbridge, a gentle local footpath walk to the north west of Cowbridge in little used green byways, meadows, 'ancient' woodlands and recently created wetland ecology. CNS member Roger Milton will be our guide for this all day walk on his 'local patch'

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety Code.

It is useful to know who is coming on the trip especially if you are willing to give a lift to those without transport. Please contact me if you need a lift and hopefully I can arrange one. Contributions towards drivers' petrol is appreciated.

For coach trips acknowledgements will only be sent if an SAE is included. Refunds are not possible unless there is someone to take your place. Please contact me if you are unable to attend. Watts coaches will be used starting at Bonvilston, main pick up at the museum and outside the school at Whitchurch. Alternative pick up points can be arranged if reasonable.

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On Being an Octogenarian Three Times Over

by Mairead Sutherland

I have, by fair means and the help of medics, reached the ripe old age of 80 years as a 'Bionic' woman full of spare parts. Still in my head I am just the same age that I've always been when 55 years ago I joined the C.N.S. To celebrate this milestone my daughters, Eleanor and Fiona, decided that I should have a party in Ireland while I was there in August, thinking it easier than transporting nephews, grand and great-grand children to Cardiff. As is usual in the family a birthday Mass was arranged to start the day of celebration. I must say I was more than a little amazed when at the conclusion, the Priest and the congregation, accompanied by the organist, sang "Happy Birthday" to me! Was this the normal or just an Irish thing now in fashion since I left? I hadn't the heart to tell them the day was not my birthday.

It was wonderful being surrounded by family. I did forgo a trip in a hot air balloon which was offered and chose instead a few days in West Mayo, where my parents were born. The Irish contingent arrived again a few days before the real birthday on the 22nd September. We followed the same procedure only this time Fiona had ordered a white stretch limosine to convey the whole group to church. When I went out there was a huge banner on the front of the house stating "Mairead is 80 Today". What with that, the balloons and the limo some neighbours took photos and curtains twitched. Now when my nephew, who is only 9 years younger handed me out of the car with a flourish some of my church friends thought I was getting married again. That afternoon I had three of my friends from the Nats to afternoon tea; Mary "G", Ursula and Diana. suppose we are the "Wrinklies" of the Society now!

What was meant to be a gentle glass of wine with my neighbours that evening somehow or other turned into a full scale Irish Hooley with much singing, drinking and my nextdoor neighbour recited a humorous "Ode to Mairead". By 1.50 AM I was beginning to flag and knowing that I had a talk to prepare for the AGM on the 24th I politely suggested we called it a night - or a morning!

Now, how did I not "Twig" something was afoot before that AGM? I should have been alerted when Mary "G" squashed my proposal to invite some old friends in the Society for a glass of wine, saying that we'd be having food at the meeting and I could then thank members who had sent cards. And how did I swallow Fiona's request to take Liam to see the slides of pirate ships - he being a pirate when he is not a Roman warrior?

The evening really came as a great surprise and I am very grateful to the Membership, especially those who attended, for all the cards, flowers, wine and eats that they prepared. I was very touched by the generosity of the Merthyr Nats in making the journey down and giving me a crystal bowl and a card signed by all my friends up there. The large cake with an Irish theme of shamrocks was made by Diana Phillips and Mary "G", Stephen Howe and Joyce LLOYD made flattering and witty speeches; An emotional evening for me, which reminded me of the wonderful life that I've had and now have time to savour.

True to Stephen Howe's predictions "everything happens to Mairead" I very soon made another journey in a white vehicle. This time, me being an attention seeker, it had blue flashing lights. In my thank you speech to the Society at the AGM I said "old age is not for sissies" and I've bounced back. Just a word of warning though; don't have three 80th birthdays in one month and live within transport distance of at least two hospitals!!

Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales - Cardiff Group

Inaugural meeting to re-establish a group in Cardiff

Tuesday 6th January 7.30pm at **Lisvane** Memorial Hall, **Heol y Delyn**, **Lisvane** Speaker:

Derek Moore - The Wildlife Trust: Present and Future **ALL WELCOME**

INDOOR MEETINGS -SPRING 2004

On Thursday, 8 January, we start the Spring season with Jeff Curds, who will describe one of our special local places - Cosmeston Country Park. Jeff knows the Park so well and can show us all its features that have developed since the days when it was converted from a quarry into the popular recreation area and wildlife park of today.

The annual Members' Evening happens on Wednesday, 21 January. This always produces an entertaining mix of contributions illustrating members' wildlife encounters both locally and farther afield.

We will have a return visit by Dr. Al Venables, who will give an update on Ascension Island, following his more recent explorations there in search of birds and other wildlife since he last came to talk to us in the Autumn of 1999. He will be with us on Thursday, 5 February, 2004.

The fourth meeting of the Spring term will be on Wednesday, 18 February, when the marine life of **Gower** will be shown to us by Mike Tonge, who has a wide-ranging interest in marine biology, diving and photography, all of which will feature in his illustrated talk.

On Wednesday, 3 March, we have another speaker making a welcome return visit to talk about and show us some of the threatened butterflies of South Wales. Richard Smith has been active in butterfly conservation for about 25 years and has travelled widely, photographing butterflies and dragonflies throughout Europe and America.

For a more exotic experience we could hardly ask for better than a trip with our President, Joan Andrews, to Galapagos -the pride of Ecuador. She visited the islands in January, 2002, and will be showing us some of the wonders of this famous area on Thursday, 18 March, to round off our winter season in **fine** style!

P.S. Don't forget the Christmas Special for 2003, on Wednesday, 10 December! Same time, same place - as always, some nibbly bits will be appreciated!

Margaret Leishman Indoor
Meetings Secretary.

November 2003.

Coed Craig Ruperra- Saturday April,20th

Cardiff Nats members met for this visit at the Ruperra Conservation Trust' carpark and started up the footpath. The rain started immediately and continued until the walk was completed and we were homeward bound. Undaunted, we continued up the gradually winding footpath to the top. Passing the tops of saplings, protected by plastic 'sleeves', of hazel, rowan, oak, and alder planted as part of 18,500 in 2000 by the Trust.

The bracken and bramble, much in evidence, failed to cover the promise of a beautiful blue carpet of bluebells. Also observed were flowers of wild strawberry, bugle, golden saxifrage, birds-foot trefoil, primrose, celandine, herb robert, buddleia, redchampion, yellow archangel, and hairy bittercress. Flowerless hogweed was also seen. Despite the rain birds heard but not seen included chiffchaff, black cap, song thrush, willow warbler, wren, robin and chaffinch.

The view from the highest point of the walk gave an excellent view of the surrounding area. A truly interesting and informative afternoon, especially regarding the regeneration of previous ancient woodland devastated by all commercial conifer plantation. A big thank you to the leaders Meg Park and the two friends of the Trust.

Further information regarding the site may be obtained via the website www.ruperra.org.uk

Flowers:

Wild strawberry	<i>Fragaria verca</i>	Bugle	<i>Ajuga deptans Lotus</i>
Golden saxifrage	<i>Chrysoplenium appositifolium</i>	Birds foot trefoil	<i>corniculatus Ranunculus</i>
Primrose Hogweed	<i>Primula vilgaris</i>	Celandine	<i>scleratus Geranium</i>
Buddleia Yellow	<i>Heracleum sphodylium</i>	Herb robert	<i>robotuanum Selene diaice</i>
archangel	<i>Daviddi</i>	Red campion	<i>Cardomine hirsuta</i>
	<i>Lameastrum galeogdolon</i>	Hairy bittercress	

Trees:

Wild pear Holm oak	<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Hornbeam Oak	<i>Carpinus betulus Quercus</i>
White rowan	<i>Quercia ilex</i>	Silver birch	<i>alba Betula pendula</i>
Sycamore	<i>Sorbus aucuparia L. edulis A cer</i>		
	<i>pseudophatanu</i>		

Hillary



Hornbeam



Silver Birch



Holm Oak

ROUND ROBIN

Those early frosts in the latter days of October brought the first respite of liquid sustenance to the thirsty grass. Heavy dew congealed overnight into a crystalline counterpane sending shafts of light into the crisp morning air as the persistent sun climbed out from behind the bronzed Castell Coch beechwood. Not so many days since, its initial appearance was over Caerphilly Mountain at the end of the leafy Glan-y-Llyn Valley and before that from the rolling outline of Graig-yr-Allt further north, rousing me prematurely from sleep.

The strengthening rays poured in through the cartwheels of spider webs on my french windows, staying the rate of cooling of tea and toast. Was this a day for gardening? I was tempted to get out my water colours while the golden aura lasted, but there was much to be done outside - not least in sweeping up the mounds of dry leaves before they became sodden and heavy. Repeated flourishes of song from the fluffed up, spherical robin entreated me to hurry. He was on his favourite perch in the mock orange blossom just outside, where the hoar frost was disintegrating into 'drip tips' on the yellowing leaves.



Cold robin

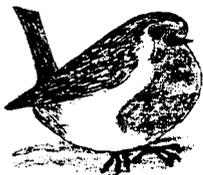
Bobby Robin was at my feet almost before my spade sank into the ground, cocking one bright eye up at me expectantly. I got busy, unearthing springtails and other minuteae, practically invisible, but relished none-the-less. Soon there was a worm, longer than himself but slender and quite a proposition to subdue. Then came another, more active. More battling, undaunted by five inches of flailing flesh. Two inches was tweaked off and gulped down.

There ensued a long recuperative pause, punctuated by muted movements within the crop, while the other three inches beat a hasty retreat. Was it worth it? Was it necessary? Was it desirable? Was it even feasible? The answer was Yes. The predator followed the prey into the undergrowth, watched by an attentive Jenny Wren, and emerged to stuff the remainder of his prize into an already bulging crop, making his outline rounder than ever. This was the equivalent of two large steaks. No wonder his concentration flagged thereafter. But only until a third worm materialised!



Busy robin

When I, too, took a break, a little charm of goldfinches converged onto the nearby teasel heads, not sufficiently trusting to visit while I worked. Two blackcaps and a goldcrest had joined the blue tits in the Bramley. (None of the usual long-tailed this time.) Unlike the ubiquitous jackdaws and carrion crows, they were not pecking mini craters



Replete robin

into the biggest and best of the apples but seeking tinies along the branches. The largest prey I spotted was a good sized spider in the beak of the cock blackcap. A hen blackbird was tucking into the jackdaws' leavings on the lawn below, discarding empty shells of denuded peel. Who says WE should eat apple peel? Her consort was pecking fastidiously in the neighbouring *Cotoneaster bullata*, spilling more berries into the slithery red mass on the crazy paving than he consumed. A brilliant bullfinch plummeted into the nearby tree and set about separating seeds from the bunches of ash keys, the discarded wings fluttering groundwards.

My three, or is it four, feral puss cats were basking in sunny spots out of the wind, recuperating after a night on the frozen tiles and too replete to bother about all this activity.

MARY E. GILLHAM



Bath time from the superb colour collection of Tony Dudley, long warden of the Llanishen Reservoirs

Public Walk - Cardiff Bay - Tuesday, June 3rd

Setting off for this walk I'd convinced myself numbers attending would be low - a poor weather forecast and an already dreary-looking evening would guarantee this I thought. As I neared our meeting place at the Norwegian Church I saw a few familiar faces so at least a few members had come along but also there did seem to be a large number of people in the vicinity of the Norwegian Church. Once we'd got people together and Joan had done a quick introduction the reality dawned- all these people had come for our walk! -a quick conservative estimate by Mike Dean gave us fifty plus!

We set off to walk around the commercial area of the Bay towards the St David's Hotel pointing out the large numbers of swifts and lesser black-backed gulls flying overhead. Plants growing out of crevices in the stone dock embankment seemed to have been treated with weedkiller - a shame because Oxford ragwort and mayweed add splashes of colour to the scene.

Keeping such a large number of people together and informed proved to be difficult but we tried to have a number of stops along the way to let people 'catch up'. A lone oystercatcher on one of the wooden structures in the Bay provided a convenient stop especially as I had taken my telescope so all those around could have good views of the bird.

Due to the housing development we could not walk around the entire foreshore and had to walk around the front of Techniques! and reassemble at the edge of the carpark and the waterfront reserve. Joan gave some more information on the Society and the details of our next public walk at Grangemore Park before we went up to the area with the curlew statues and spend a little time here. We then set off along the boardwalk trail to the edge of the Bay opposite the Yacht Club.

The impending weather was ensuring the swifts were now flying very low giving good views but generally most birds had 'taken cover'. Out on the 'bund' there were large numbers of lesser black backed gulls and some cormorants.

Salt tolerant plants such as scurvy grass continue to flower around the fringes of the new reserve but the transition to a freshwater environment is shown by new plants like Gipsywort.

By the end of the evening only a few 'stalwarts' were left - most of the others had been driven away due to the increasingly cold wind but we had got away without any rain. A lesson learnt was to be more organised for the 'masses' next time!

Tricia Wood with additions from Linda Nottage.

Taf Fechan with the Merthyr Naturalists' Society Saturday 28th June

Ten members of the CNS met a number of Methyr Naturalists' Society (MNS) members at the 'Black Patch' lay-by for a walk along the Taf Fechan Nature Trail. From the lay-by we crossed onto the Taff Fechan Trail - the limestone habitat being evident by plants such as thyme and the yellowing of the acid loving bracken. Quaking grass and eye bright - a parasitic plant of grass were also present.

Crossing the Taff trail we walked onto the nature trail by means of a steep decent into the Taf Fechan river valley. We stopped and looked at an impressive and very pink dog rose as we descended. In the river itself we found a number of yellow monkey flowers *Mimulus guttatus*. Brown trout inhabit the river and a number of splashes thought to be caused by them were noted on our walk but we did not get the expected good views at the base of our descent - the usual best place to see them.

Along side the Taf Fechan river at this point was an exposed 'leaf carrying water from the river upstream to Cyfarthfa castle lake down in Merthyr itself. By the 'leaf' were a large number of common spotted and hybrid common spotted/marsh orchids, meadow sweet and common cats ear. A meadow brown butterfly was flying in the area also. As we walked in the meadow along the river up to Pontsam we noted fairy flax, another limestone loving plant, and chalk ferns by a sluice on the riverbank. A speckled wood butterfly was also seen here plus a number of anthills. The bright blue common milkwort was also noted in this area.

Further along the trail the area became wetter and a number of rush species were seen including pathfinder rush plus oval sedge.

The river valley started to become steeper as we continued along the old tramway which was used to transport limestone from the Gumos quarry to the Cyfarthfa ironworks. In the river itself potholes in the limestone riverbed, which had been formed by pebbles, caught up in the swirling currents, were covered in moss in this area as the riverbed had been uplifted. Ladies mantle was growing along the trail and there were some good examples of 'tufa' where the lime had leached from water flowing over mosses growing on the steep valley sides producing 'curtains' of limestone. Also seen were yellow pimpernel, field rose and New Zealand willow herb. A grey wagtail was seen and a green woodpecker. Mountain or lemon scented fern was also growing along the river trail. A heron was disturbed as we walked along the river and those bringing up the rear had views of a family of dippers. Our lunchstop was to be at the 'blue pool' waterfall at Pontsam.

As we came up to the carpark at this end - where we said goodbye to Margaret and Joan who were off to West Wales! - we had a display of four buzzards in a thermal over the area. At our lunch spot and nearby common blue and red admiral butterflies were seen. We walked back along the opposite bank of the river dipping down close to the river's edge. We saw a family of grey wagtails and everyone had a good view of a dipper. The valley on this side was less steep and started as meadow progressing to woodland. Obviously more acidic in this area with less limestone evident due to the healthy looking and numerous bracken plants. The presence of broad -leafed helleborine plants indicated that we were back in 'limestone' country as the valley again became more steep sided.

One of the meadows contained a large number of horses, most of them mares with foals at foot. Plants on this side of the river included hemlock water dropwort, devils bit scabius, eyebright, slender St. Johns wort, and sheep's bit. A golden ringed dragonfly - a typical inhabitant of upland streams was seen. Also a great spotted woodpecker was present in the area. Small oak trees alongside the trail were heavily infected with marble galls. We also heard a number of common green grasshoppers calling but there was no chance of finding a specimen in the thick foliage.

Near the end of our walk we went past the ruined remains of the Gumos mill which was used as a fulling mill or 'Tandy' where woollen cloth was treated. A steep climb up brought us back out onto the trail near to our starting point. Thanks go to the members of the MNS who guided us on our walk. We hope to reciprocate next year.

Tricia Wood.

Bat Walk - August 6th

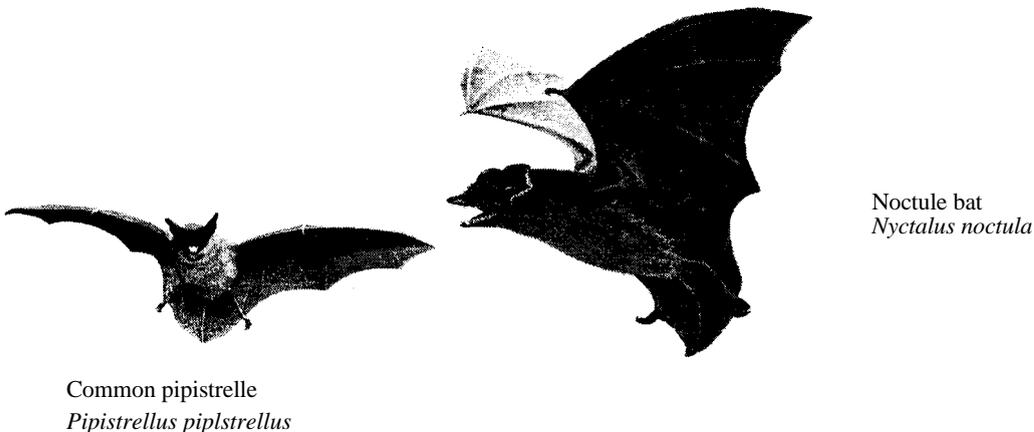
We met our leader, Danielle Cowell, outside the Riverbank Hotel as arranged just before dusk. Daniellq iad arranged a room for us to use in the hotel so we moved inside for a quick presentation plus a quiz! on the four species we might encounter.

Apart from an excellent short lecture and visual presentation we also had auditory presentations, or which we were tested, which would assist us later when using the bat detectors Danielle had brought along for us to use.

The four species we were instructed on were;

1. Daubentons - a medium sized bat up to 27cms which flies in a speedy 'hovercraft like' action - often hovering along the river and is often seen using its feet or tail as a scoop to pull insects off the water
2. Pipistrelle - now divided into three types according to their calling frequency - the most common bat and usually seen in towns - quite small 19-25cms - has a fast and jerky flight.
3. Noctule - a large bat 32-40cms with long narrow pointed wings - often the first seen in the evening - common around the Stadium - has a bird- like flight - often found near tress especially at woodland edges.
4. Serotine - found in similar habitats to noctules and also an early flyer and a large bat 32-38 cms - we would be very lucky to see this one as there are few in Wales and no known roost sites here -these bats have broader wings and are more manoverable in flight often flapping with short glides and steep descents - they also 'flop' onto foliage or the ground to feed.

Armed with all the knowledge and our bat detectors we then went outside for our walk. The area around the Stadium was unusually quiet, as Danielle had reported this was usually a good site for bats. We then took a leisurely walk up along the left bank of the Taff river and were soon rewarded with large numbers of pipistrelle bats both seen and heard (all of the 45 frequency species) - one area at the water's edge was particularly well populated with feeding bats plus it was here we saw and heard noctule bats also. Our) thanks go to Danielle for her presentation and guidance. Tricia Wood.



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was found plus a species of hydroid Tubularia larynx which contained the characteristic 'stinging cells' to catch plankton.

The pools then became less productive as they were too subject to the wave action to provide good safe habitats - only mussels being evident. Also as the maximum of low tide was nearly reached we decided to retrace our steps.

On our return we managed to find a couple of velvet swimming crabs *Necorapuber* (also known as devil crabs due to their red eyes and ferocious behaviour!)

We then returned back via a different route across the dunes to the carpark - a few of us managed to catch up with the black tern flying over the Kenfig pool on the way. My thanks go to Morton for his excellent and enthusiastic guidance once again. Plus welcome again to the new members who joined us on the trip.

Tricia Wood.

Seashore Foray - September 27th 2003.

Twenty one members and guests met at Kenfig NNR carpark to be led on the seashore 'foray' by Morton Jenkins.

In his introductory address Morton explained the differences between this trip and our previous one to Oxwich in March 2002. This trip would not consist of the large number of species which we encountered at Oxwich but would show the interdependence of species as predators and prey as we would be concentrating our efforts on the large 'biomass' of the mussel beds north of Sker Point. On the rocky outcrop all areas would be used, as the adjacent sandy areas are not suitable for the species we would be looking at.

We then set off across the Kenfig dunes to reassemble at the coast. We needed to go at a brisk pace to ensure we made maximum use of the low equinox tide but most did manage to see clouded yellow butterflies along the way (plus there was a spot of birdwatching done!) Birds were much in evidence once we reached our destination of the mussel beds mainly oystercatchers and gulls, mainly herring gulls.

The mussel beds were composed of common mussels *Mytilus edulis*, which Morton explained lived up to six years after which time they became too large to stay attached and were dislodged by tides etc. The mussels could be aged by rings on the shell usually two rings per year. A major predator of the mussels, the dog whelk *Nucella lapillus* was present - these molluscs drilling holes into the mussels and sucking out the contents. Other predators of the mussels included edible crabs *Cancer pagurus* and large numbers of hermit crabs which seemed to favour old dog whelk shells as their homes. Long clawed porcelain crabs *Pisidia longicornis*, sand mason worms *Lanice conchilega* and their 'tube' homes were found, plus sea mat *Membranipora membranacea* another filter feeder was found on a mussel shell.

Large numbers of barnacles characteristic of exposed rocky shores were also present. Next a sting wrinkle *Ocenebra erinacea* was found. Large amounts of sea lettuce *Ulva lactuca* was indicative of the run off of nitrates from the surrounding land as this would not normally occur so prolifically in this area. Of the few algae species present - apart from sea lettuce - the most common was Irish moss *Chondrus crispus*.

Also found were 'mats' of honeycomb worm *Sabellaria alveolata* another 'tube' worm. Our first starfish *Astropecten irregularis* began to appear as we proceeded further out - we would soon see large numbers of these. Also 'others' had spotted the starfish as we soon saw a couple of herring gulls with starfish in their beaks!

As we continued out the mussels became much smaller showing we were coming to areas of new mussel beds. Further out the currents could be extreme - force 8 gales are not uncommon on this coast and wreck havoc with the mussels further out from shore. Humans were also victims, Morton told us about the wrecking of an American ship and the Mumbles lifeboat in 1947 in which the lives of both crews were lost.

We then turned to species of sponges - the bread crumb sponge *Halichondria panacea*, so called because of its alleged smell of bread, being very common and a myxilla species. Another species of crab was then found a spider crab or sea spider. We would find numbers of these - many placing sponges on their bodies as a form of camouflage. Plus a broad clawed porcelain crab *Porcellana platycheles*.

Porphyra umbilicalis seaweed was then found - the seaweed used to make laver bread or bara lava. The shell of a dead slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata* was then discovered. This American invader competes with the mussels for food and space so is an unwelcome alien invader to those with commercial mussel beds. This species was introduced in the 1970s - it grows in chains and frequently changes sex! Its name derives from the arched shape to its shell. Sea anemones seen included dahlia anemones *Urticina feline*. A couple of grey top shells *Gibbula cineraria* were then found plus a sea squirt *Asidielia scabra* and an oyster shell with 'perching' baby slipper limpets. A venus shell species, closely related to the 'cockle'

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FUNGUS FORAY : BUTE PARK on 19th OCTOBER 2003

Well over twenty members and friends gathered outside the National Museum to meet our leaders from the Glamorgan Fungus Group, Teifion **Davies** and **Mervyn Howells**. Before setting off we examined items from elsewhere:- photos of brackets in **Porthkerry** Park including the rare Lacquered Bracket *Ganoderma lucidum* found by Bonny and Brian Harvey, specimens from **Hensol** Forest and a cluster of striking orange-capped **Redlead** Roundhead *Stropharia aurantiaca* that Mill **Presdee** and Margaret **Leishman** brought from **Cefn Onn**. These latter toadstools have become more common now that bark mulch is used so extensively in parks and gardens.

Setting off towards the castle, we all enjoyed the autumn sunshine but later the cold north-easterly wind blowing across Coopers Field caused some members to leave before **lunchtime** when the rest dispersed. The tulip trees lining **theS** entrance to the park glowed with golden and tan leaves. We stood" aside to allow the charity walkers to pass while Teifion **explaine**c the formation of fairy rings. Unfortunately, because of the exceptionally dry autumn, there were few toadstools to be seer although we spread out to scour the park for specimens. Most fungi] were found growing on old timber and ranged from the **rock-harc** brackets of a *Ganoderma sp.* on a mature Holm Oak to decaying tiers of the impressive Giant **Polypore** forming a frill around £ Beech stump and scaly new clusters of Shaggy **Pholiota** on an **olc** Cherry. Following directions from a regular walker in the park, I found the large **dried-out** brackets of Dryad's Saddle and flabby flesh-coloured layers of Jelly Rot. As with all our finds, Teifion patiently explained and identified them. He likened the wrinkled underside of the Jelly Rot to Nora Batty's stockings - a memorable image!

Teifion superintends **Clyne** Gardens in Swansea so his professional expertise was also valuable in identifying some of the many exotic fruits in the arboretum such as the green balls of Black Walnut, long bean-pods of *Catalpa* and inflated 'hops' on a Hop Hornbeam. We came across the sad sight of a mature Silver Maple which had had all its branches sawn off. Our expert soon pointed out the reason for this seeming vandalism - a deep cleft running down the trunk which could have led to catastrophic splitting and collapse. It is good to know that Cardiff Parks Department is vigilant for our safety.



Maples, oaks and birches provided a range of colourful foliage but the most striking show was from Crab Apples and Hawthorns covered in abundant rich red and yellow fruits. One of the Crabs supported a few white gill fungi which Teifion hoped to confirm as Scaly Oyster Mushroom, a relative rarity and a good find to round off an enjoyable morning. After expressing our thanks we dispersed, some of us to sit in sunshine on the **riverbank** to enjoy our picnic lunch while watching the passing wildlife.

An immature Cormorant flew downstream. Mallard swam against the current and Grey Wagtails flitted across the river. There had seemed to be few birds in the park apart from the ubiquitous Magpies and Crows and the high-pitched calls of tits and **Goldcrests**, but a good population of Grey Squirrels. Lunch-time produced another mammal in the shape of a Weasel which darted across our field of view and vanished into the **bankside** vegetation. Despite our attempts at Weasel-enticing noises (squeals and squeaks made by sucking air through ones teeth) we were unable to attract it out.

Provisional list of species, using the "List of Recommended English Names for Fungi", recently published by the British Mycological Society, Plantlife, CCW et al.

Armillaria mellea	Honey Fungus The	Bolbitius vitellinus	Yellow Fieldcap
Clitopilus prunulus	Miller Glistening Inkcap	Coprinus atramentarius	Common Inkcap
Coprinus micaceus	Pinkgill sp. Bracket sp.	Coprinus plicatilis	Pleated Inkcap Bell sp.
Entoloma sp.	Common Puffball Coral	Galerina sp.	Sulphur Tuft Giant
Ganoderma sp.	Spot Willow Bracket	Hypholoma fasciculare	Polypore Mottlegill sp.
Lycoperdon perlatum	Shaggy Scalycap Dryad's	Meripilus giganteus	Jelly Rot Veiled (Scaly)
Nectria cinnabarina	Saddle Bleeding Broadleaf	Paneolus sp. Phlebia	Oyster Brittlestem sp.
Phellinus igniarius	Crust Turkeytail	tremellosus Pleurotus	Lumpy Bracket
Pholiota squarrosa		dryinus Psathyrella sp.	
Polyporus squamosus		Trametes gibbosa	
Stereum rugosum			
Trametes versicolor			

Linda and Rob Nottage

A QUESTION OF LOGIC

I went for a walk the other day by the estuary and saw at the water's edge six different birds lined up almost in a row. I vaguely remember a disturbance and the next minute all the birds had vanished. Then an amazing thing happened. They all came back to a very similar line and I remember that not one of the birds had returned to its previous position. You have probably guessed by now that I was having a nightmare. But the strangest thing was that I recalled the information printed below and with just those details, I was able, when fully conscious, to note in my field book both the original and the final positions of all six birds CAN YOU???

The Spoonbill and the Red Necked Phalarope were never next to each other.

The Shelduck's place was taken by the Oystercatcher who moved one fewer place to the left than the Shelduck did to the right, but moved more than one place more than the Little Egret which returned to the spot that the Oystercatcher left.

Neither the Oystercatcher nor the Little Egret started or finished at either end of the line. The Little Egret was next left to the Oystercatcher but ended up more than two places to its right. The Great Crested Grebe moved as many places to the right as the Red Necked Phalarope spun to the

left. The Little Egret moved in the same direction as the Great Crested Grebe but by a shorter distance, while the Spoonbill moved one fewer place to the left than the Red Necked Phalarope. The Shelduck was next left to the Spoonbill but finished more than two places to the right of it.

First Position _____

Final Position. _____

Graham Duff

CNC Literature – come and get it! (most of it is free)

What's available?

The Society holds a variety of items of literature that are available to members (see below). Some are copies of the Society's own historical documents. The "Transactions", for example, were published continuously from the start of the Society's establishment in 1867 through to 1986. They contain learned articles, accounts of lectures and field meetings, wildlife records, as well as formal reports from committees and of official proceedings. There is much information of historical and research interest contained in them. A complete set is held by the Society's Librarian at the National Museum. Nowadays our newsletters provide a more frequent but less formal picture of the Society's activities and matters of interest to members.

When is it available?

I will bring a selection of items to most indoor meetings that I attend. You are welcome to browse, but if there is something specific that you're interested in, contact me first so that I can make sure it's available.

What's the cost?

Walks booklets are £1 each (every member should have them!). Copies of the Society's own publications are free, but a modest donation to Society funds would be appreciated for them and for any of the other items, with the exception of Mary Gillham's books where the proceeds go to the author.

CNS Literature

1. Transactions

VolLXIV 1931
VolsLXXXI-XC 1950-61 (set) (*Vols
LXXXVI & LXXXVIII missing*)
VolLXXXII 1952-53 VolXC 1960-61
VolsXCVI-C 1970-86 (sets)
VolXCVIII 1974-76

VolLXVII 1934
VolsLXXXI-XC 1950-61 (part set)
Vols LXXXI - XCI 1950-63 (set)
Vol LXXXIX 1959-60
VolXC VI 1970-72
VolXC VII 1972-74
VolXCIX 1976-78

2. Reprints from Transactions

CNS - A Condensed History (H. Morrey Salmon 1974)

Some Lectures of the Past (W.K. Bemfeld from Vol XCIV 1966-68 - 5 pages) *Nansen, Churchill, Mortimer Wheeler, etc*

Ornithological Notes 1970-72 (H. Morrey Salmon)

Insect-life in the Coal Forests (F.J. North from Vol LXII 1931)

The physique of Neolithic man (W.K. Bemfeld from Vol XCI 1961-63)

3. Bird Reports

Glamorgan 1984

Mid & South Glamorgan 1988

4. Newsletters

No 10 June 1991 No 23 Sep 1994 No 30 June 1996 No 46 June 2000 No 16 Dec 1992 No 24
Dec 1994 No 31 Sept 1996 No 47 Sept 2000 No 17 Mar 1993 No 25 Mar 1995 No 32 Dec
1996 No 55 Sept 2002 No 18 June 1993 No 26 June 1995 No 35 Sept 1997 No 20 Dec 1993
No 27 Sept 1995 No 39 Sept 1998 No 22 June 1994 No 29 Mar 1996 No 41 Mar 1999

5. Cardiff Wildlife Walks booklets

Cardiff s Wildlife - 6 Wildlife Walks in the City (green covers) Wildlife Around

Cardiff- 6 further Wildlife walks (blue covers) Other Publications

1. By Mary Gillham

Town Bred, Country Nurtured

Glamorgan Heritage Coast Series:
Limestone Downs Vol 3
Coastal Downs Vol 4 Sea Cliffs
Vol 5

TaffFechan Nature Reserve - A Guided Walk

2. Bird Reports

Gower Birds Vol 3 No 3 (1979) Gower
Birds Vol 4 No 4 (1985) Gower Birds
Vol 4 No 5 (1986)

3. Miscellaneous / Commercial

Nature in Wales Vol 6 1987 The Severn Estuary - A

Heritage of Wildlife

The Countryside of South Wales (Heather Angel) A History of Amateur Photography in
Cardiff (Cardiff Camera Club 1996)
British Moths Book 1 (Jan-old Nature Series) Wildflowers of Sequoia &

King's Canyon National Parks USA

Towards a strategy for the Gwent Levels - into the next millennium - A
Consultation Document (CCW 1998)

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SUMMER SPECIALS

This prolonged summer weather has been excellent for insects with abundant Painted Ladies and a fair scattering of Clouded Yellows - both migrant butterflies. My Bonvilston garden has played host to 17 butterfly species this year including a superb Silver-washed Fritillary on 11th and 12th August. Only once before, in 1995, have I seen one nectaring here. It is a strong flier and may have wandered miles from the nearest colony. During September up to four Small Coppers were regular on my pond-side Fleabane while friends have reported far greater numbers of this pretty little butterfly this autumn. In early July a male Wool Carder Bee *Anthidium manicatum* set up territory around a patch of Lamb's-lugs *Stachys lanata* in our front garden. Females scrape off the woolly coating of these leaves to make their nests.

The undoubted highlight from our moth-trap was Convolvulus Hawk-moth (right) in mid-August. It is a huge insect with long grey wings and a pink-banded body. Like the delicate pale Vestal with an oblique red stripe, the tiny Diamond-back Moth and the 83 SilverYs caught the same night, it is an immigrant from the continent. The Dark Sword-grass moths we trapped in September were also incomers from abroad. By October catch numbers were much reduced but a Merveille du Jour on 12th was well worth a second look before release. Amazingly on that day we also watched a Hummingbird Hawk-moth nectaring at our Schizostylis flowers. This endearing insect was widely seen zipping from bloom to bloom in Britain this year.

Perhaps more exciting than these specials was to find my first ever Six-ielted Clearwing at Aberthaw in early June. It looks much more like a hoverfly or wasp than a moth so is easily missed as it is its plants of Bird's-foot Trefoil on which its larvae feed. We have carried out regular monthly wildlife surveys at Aberthaw during the summer and were thrilled to see a record number of butterfly species, 21, on 2^d August. We despaired of noting any Brown Argus butterflies until 23rd September when a fresh individual was present at Aberthaw, followed by one the next ay at Dyffryn Gardens and a single near Llancarfan on 3rd October.

Also in the Vale of Glamorgan we spotted our first *Phasia hemiptera*, a strange Tachinid fly with broad bluish iridescent wings, near St. Donats. Equally showy and exciting was the Hornet Hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* we watched nectaring on Ivy blossom alongside Hornets and Comma Butterflies beside Alton Water in Suffolk at the end of August. A vintage year for insects with, perhaps, the promise of more to come if global warming continues.

Linda Nottage